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June 1, 2010

The Honorable Arne Duncan
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

On behalf of the students, families, educators, and other citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, I am writing to respectfully submit our Phase 2 application for the Race to the Top Fund.

Based on personal experience, I know that high-quality educational experiences can transform a person's life. As the governor of Massachusetts, I will do everything in my power to ensure that all students in our state have access to learning opportunities that inspire their imagination and creativity, promote achievement and excellence, and lead to lifelong success. I will also ensure that all students are taught by passionate and highly qualified educators who are committed to supporting students to their full potential, and that all schools and districts are led by exceptional leaders.

Massachusetts is well on its way to achieving these goals because we have a long-standing history of implementing bold and innovative reform strategies. In 1993, the enactment of the Education Reform Act established the foundation for standards-based reform in our state. One of my first initiatives as governor was to launch the Commonwealth Readiness Project, and I worked with education, business, and community leaders to develop an ambitious and long-term agenda for reducing persistent achievement gaps, enhancing the quality of our educator

workforce, increasing college and career readiness, and unleashing innovation and systemic change throughout the public education system.

I also established the Executive Office of Education and appointed a Secretary of Education to implement statewide policies and develop a truly seamless education system from birth through higher education. Most recently, in January 2010, I signed a groundbreaking education bill, *An Act Relative to the Achievement Gap*, that includes powerful strategies to intervene in our lowest-performing schools; establish new Innovation Schools, in-district schools that operate with increased autonomy and flexibility while keeping school funding within districts; and lift charter caps in our lowest-performing districts.

As a result of these efforts and the hard work and dedication of our educators, we are consistently recognized for our leadership with regard to student achievement as demonstrated by our students' performance on both national and international assessments. We are also recognized as having the most rigorous standards and assessments in the country, and have significantly contributed to the development of the Common Core Standards.

We have accomplished this work by adhering to several core principles: steadfast commitment to high standards and expectations; collaboration with educators and unions to implement reform with – not to – the field; learning from the past to inform the work of the future; and collaboration with an impressive network of education, community, business, and civic partners to build ownership and capacity to sustain our reform efforts over time. These principles, coupled with a stronger legislative framework for bold reform efforts and a more coherent public education system, are guiding the next phase of education reform in Massachusetts.

Our Race to the Top proposal is the roadmap for this second phase of reform, and reflects challenges that we must still address. We have unacceptable achievement and attainment gaps that disproportionately affect lower-income students, students of color, and students with disabilities. Some of our educators do not have access to professional development opportunities that they need to continually improve instruction,

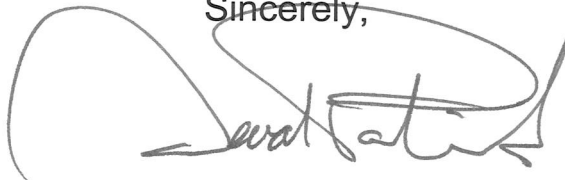
and we do not have a sufficient number of highly skilled educators who can teach English language learners and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics courses.

We will address these issues by implementing initiatives that address the following priorities: 1) developing an effective, academically capable, diverse, and culturally competent educator workforce; 2) providing curricular and instructional resources that support educator effectiveness and student achievement; 3) targeting instructional and other resources to students, their families, and educators in our lowest performing schools; and 4) increasing college and career readiness for all students. These priorities are directly aligned with my long-term agenda for education reform in Massachusetts, and implementation of our comprehensive array of strategies will enable us to finish the work that we started nearly twenty years ago.

Massachusetts is able and ready to achieve the goals of the Race to the Top Fund and the Obama administration. We have a demonstrated record of success and a long-standing history of productive collaboration with educators, teachers' unions, and business and community partners. We have an outstanding leadership team and have built capacity at different levels to ensure that we will sustain our initiatives over time. We also have renewed commitment to doing what is right so that each and every one of our students – no matter his/her ZIP code, age, or socioeconomic status – has the opportunity to excel.

I appreciate your leadership, and look forward to continuing our strong partnership to achieve common goals. Thank you in advance for your consideration of our proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Arne Duncan", with a large, sweeping flourish on the left side.